

# Minutes

## South La Crosse Transportation Study Local Business Meeting

---

WisDOT Project ID 1644-08-00  
Thursday, September 2, 2004  
8:00 a.m.  
All Star Banquets

---

**Minutes by:** Chuck Wade

**Present:** WisDOT – Beth Price, Dale Oestreich  
LAPC – Tom Faella  
City of La Crosse – Larry Kirch  
SEH Inc. – Darren Fortney, Jim Hanson, Chuck Wade  
Local Business Representatives – Approximately 34 local business representatives attended the meeting.

**Display:** Corridor base map

**Materials distributed:** Project contacts sheet, copy of presentation slides, input form

**Action items:** WisDOT may conduct special counts at the Mormon Coulee Road/33<sup>rd</sup> Street Intersection.

1. Welcome
2. Study overview

Darren Fortney and Jim Hanson presented project background information including the purpose and need, limits, timeline and other information (crash, deficiencies, Origin Destination Study, etc.)

3. Land use/transportation/access refresher (presentation/video)

Chuck Wade presented a brief synopsis of basic planning concepts such as the continuous development/transportation cycle, roadway hierarchy and access management. A short access management video followed the presentation.

4. Identification of issues

A facilitated discussion of issues identified by local business leaders as follows:

- Land use/economics
  - The corridor is experiencing a transition in land uses. As an example of the transition, many of the older hotels are converting to apartments, or commercial enterprises. A specific hotel is converting to an elderly living complex offering various levels of assisted living and housing.

- The long-term vision for South Avenue/Mormon Coulee Road needs to consider what the long-term land use activities will be so that it can accommodate both the existing uses and the future uses over time.
- Traffic
  - Are there any scheduled construction plans for the US 14/61/WIS 35 intersection? WisDOT will reevaluate the intersection as part of this study. Short and intermediate-term improvements could be identified for implementation, but it is too early in the process to know for sure.
  - It is perceived that construction of a median along the South Avenue/Mormon Coulee Road corridor could be more beneficial to businesses with full access located at intersections. It was suggested that mid-block businesses could see increased hardship with a median restricting access to right-in/right-out. In reality, well placed median breaks could reduce this effect. Fairness to businesses will need to be balanced with safety needs on the corridor concerning the placement of medians and median openings.
  - Backage roads may be a more likely long-term tool that could be used than frontage roads because of the limitations of the corridor and the way abutting parcels have developed. The greatest limitations on the corridor are north of Losey Boulevard. East Avenue is an example of a roadway that is behaving like a backage road to Mormon Coulee Road.
  - An issue with the five and six-legged intersections (45 degree angles) is that businesses located on these corners have limited parking options, and feel like they are isolated from other businesses. In addition, the skewed intersections do not accommodate pedestrian crossings of South Avenue.
  - Will Segment A (Urban Corridor) plans allow for left-turn lanes? The perception is that accommodating left-turn lanes on the four-lane undivided section of South Avenue could require major land acquisition for right-of-way. The four-lane undivided section of South Avenue is recognized as a potential problem area if left-turning vehicles are not accommodated. In addition, mid-block access would need to be considered due to the unlikely implementation of backage roads in this area.
  - Could the speed limit be lowered between Broadview Place and the US 14/61/WIS 35 intersection? The 40 mph speed limit is perceived to be too fast for a commercial area. As such, the traffic signal north of Pammel Creek is perceived as a calming device slowing vehicles down. Though the speed limit should be checked to see if it is appropriate for the segment, a problem with lowering it is that crashes could increase because of a greater difference between those vehicles following the posted speed and those driving at the perceived comfortable speed (speed differential).
  - Is there a left-turn arrow at the Mormon Coulee Road/Ward Avenue intersection for southbound movements from Ward Avenue to Mormon Coulee Road? If not, is one needed?
- Safety
  - The 16<sup>th</sup> Street/South Avenue intersection is very wide and awkward for pedestrians and bicyclists to use. Pedestrian safety is an issue for this intersection. Possible treatments could include changes in pavement color, improved signage, and construction of sidewalk ramps.

- The East Avenue/South Avenue intersection is difficult to cross as a pedestrian due to a lack of gaps in northbound traffic.
- Left-turns from 33<sup>rd</sup> Street are an issue.
- Aesthetics
  - WIS 35 is part of the Great River Road. Implementation of aesthetic treatments could be more likely than for other similar projects because of the designation.
  - An example of the application of aesthetic treatments to a corridor includes the activities that took place along Rose Street. The treatments that were applied there include: underground utilities, billboard removal, street scaping and banners, wide sidewalks (8 feet), human scale lighting (also similar style to downtown), colored and textured pavement, and themed elements.
  - In terms of aesthetic treatments, if property owners apply similar styles to what is done within the street scaping, the effect is much more dramatic. An example of this is the Jackson Plaza (also façade and other treatments to the building).
  - There are several locations where above-ground utilities detract from the aesthetic character of the corridor. The best time replace above-ground with under-ground utilities is during major reconstruction projects.
- Other issues
  - Several factors that need to be considered in order to move from the study stage to the implementation stage include: funding, safety, and community support.
  - This study could result in identifying short- and intermediate-term improvements that could be implemented if they are identified as a high priority.
  - The subdivision located in the Brickworks area is currently isolated in terms of bike and pedestrian connectivity. What are the options for connectivity? Could a tunnel be constructed to reduce the barrier effect of Mormon Coulee Road?
  - Mormon Coulee Road acts as a barrier for bicyclists crossing the highway.
  - For the success of the study, it is considered a team effort between WisDOT, the city of La Crosse, town of Shelby, LAPC and local businesses.

## 5. Next meeting

- Public information meeting #1 – Thursday, September 2, 2004

## 6. Local business input forms

Local business input forms were mailed with the meeting invitations. They were also used at the meeting to facilitate the discussion and input from the business community. The input forms requested information from five topical areas: (typed as is)

- A. Land use/economics (development trends, local economy, etc.)
  1. Better lighting down Mormon Coulee Road – safety.
  2. Improve sidewalks – repair, replace and appearance.
  3. Business corridor

- B. Traffic (intersections, congestion, speed, etc.)
    - 1. Backage Road into Wal-Mart from Markel Road for easier access to Shelby Mall & through other businesses.
    - 2. Look into putting a left-turn signal at the Mormon Coulee/Ward Avenue/East Avenue intersection by Claisons and the new coffee place.
    - 3. Slow traffic down by patrols.
    - 4. Access – I would like to see at least the current level of access to my business if not more access. Congestion – The new traffic light north of Pammel Creek backs traffic up past my driveway in late afternoon which affects my access.
    - 5. The hospital parking lot causes a bottle neck in the mornings. This is the employee lot on the old Sara Lee property across the street from our building.
  - C. Local circulation (parking lots, cross access, etc.)
    - 1. Between Losey Blvd. to Ward Ave – Bring in more access management, too many driveways.
    - 2. Hard to get from Highway 14 to Highway 35. Left turn very hard at certain times of day. Leave direct access to business on Mormon Coulee Road. Traffic going through another is also prone to crashes, yet reported differently.
    - 3. Why no left-turn lane built into concrete island. Would be far more efficient for traffic and my customers.
  - D. Safety (crashes, traffic, etc.)
    - 1. Traffic light at Mormon Coulee Road/33<sup>rd</sup> Street. Redo the US 14/61/WIS 35 intersection.
    - 2. Lower the speed limit – 40 mph is too high with this amount of traffic.
  - E. Other issues (bike, pedestrian, transit, aesthetics, etc.).
    - 1. Try to keep bicycles off major roadways.
7. Post meeting follow-up